



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology

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### IGF 2014

#### RESPONSE TO CALL FOR INFORMATION - BY THE MAG CHAIR

##### Contribution by the

##### Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The following note is a response to the "Call for Information"<sup>1</sup> launched by the Chair of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG), Janis Karklins, and published on the IGF website.

In the Call for Information, Janis Karklins invites interested organisations to "*share information, on a voluntary basis, about concrete decisions or actions that have been taken as a result of engagement during the current mandate of the IGF*", with a view to presenting a synthesized report of the information received at the IGF in Istanbul.

The European Commission has actively supported the IGF since its inception because of the real value it attaches to this forum. This also includes the financial support to the IGF Secretariat. The reason is that the IGF has proven to be a very successful and useful platform in the past years. However, this should not preclude the discussions on how it should be further improved.

Therefore, this note focuses on the concrete benefits and advantages that the European Commission has so far drawn from the IGF and the resulting actions and decisions it has taken. The on-going discussion on the ways to further improve and strengthen the IGF is not addressed here.

## 2. KEY BENEFITS BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM

Over the last years, significant changes have occurred in the Internet governance landscape, where the IGF has become an increasingly important actor in the Internet eco-

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/125-igf-2014/preparatory-process/1621-call-for-information>

system. As shared by other stakeholders, the European Commission considers that the main value of the IGF lies in the following aspects:

- it creates a "one-stop shop" by bringing together an extensive range of participants from many communities around the world, including those who do not have opportunities to meet elsewhere;
- it gives an opportunity for the "right questions" to be asked as it creates a space for frank and open discussions among players with very different ideas, without the pressure to defend positions in a negotiated text and creating an atmosphere where people can better understand the concerns of the others;
- it provides a platform with the format and agenda which has successfully evolved during the past years to take into account the emergence of new themes and the evolution of Internet governance discussions

The main features of the IGF as a multi-stakeholder, non-binding and inclusive forum have allowed stakeholders (including those who do not have other possibilities to express their views elsewhere) to make their voices heard.

### **3. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS DRAWN BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE RESULTING ACTIONS/DECISIONS?**

#### **3.1. Multistakeholderism at work**

The IGF is a lively demonstration of "global multistakeholderism at work". Thanks to the collaborative efforts to bring together all those countries, civil society, business, academia and technical communities, that are looking for common ground to ensure a free, open and robust Internet, the IGF proves that there is an alternative to top-down approaches to Internet governance issues.

#### **3.2. Regional and National IGFs in Europe**

In Europe, the IGF has been a catalyst for the creation of regional and national Dialogues on Internet governance. The European Commission welcomes this development which enriches the overall process by adding a variety of angles and bringing in local issues. This also increases the level of inclusiveness – not least by allowing stakeholders to engage in Internet governance dialogue in their own language. In its Communication on Internet governance and policy<sup>2</sup>, the European Commission makes reference to the regional European Dialogue, EuroDIG, as one example of existing networks on which to possibly build upon "*to minimize future fragmentation of Internet governance related policies*". As stated in the Communication, this approach would respond to the need to have an early upstream consultation mechanism in place that is adapted to the fast pace of technological change and the resulting implications on Internet governance related policies, through a continuous dialogue with a wide and complex range of stakeholder groups. Another important function could be to help coordinate the activities of existing advisory bodies in the EU whenever relevant.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2014:0072:FIN:EN:PDF>

The European Commission needs to be able to engage in a meaningful manner with the diverse set of Internet stakeholders in Europe, also including grass-roots initiatives that form an integral part of the Internet ecosystem and therefore plans to launch a broad consultation, on how to ensure adequate and transparent multi-stakeholder involvement in the formulation of future European Internet governance policies.

### **3.3. Engagement of national and European legislators**

In the last editions of the IGF, the European Commission, together with the European Parliament, formed "joint delegations" to echo the voice of EU citizens in the IGF debates. National MPs have also often participated in the IGF.

Indeed, the IGF has been a vehicle for national and European parliamentarians to engage in the debate, giving impetus to inter-parliamentarians contacts and cooperation. In this sense, the IGF has contributed to enabling European policy-makers to fulfil their responsibilities towards their citizens with regard to internet governance.

### **3.4. Establishment and consolidation of contact networks**

The European Commission has found great value in actively participating in the IGF to extend its contact networks around the globe. This has provided a wealth of information and input, which contribute to the Commission internal knowledge and assessment of Internet governance issues.

### **3.5. Increased knowledge and "food for thought" for EU policy-making on Internet-related issues**

The continuous participation of high level representatives and officials of the European Commission in the IGF has contributed to shaping and sharing our current vision of Internet governance. The European Commission has taken reflections "back home" and drawn its conclusions for its own context from global discussions at the IGF. The recent Communication on Internet governance and policy in particular, and the EU Digital Agenda<sup>3</sup> more in general, reflect many of the IGF's themes of discussions. The European Union is addressing many of those challenges through its policies, programmes and regulatory provisions.

### **3.6. Capacity-building**

Last but not least, also thanks to its participation in the IGF, the European Commission has continued its engagement in technological, policy and regulatory capacity-building in order to establish and promote multistakeholder processes, in particular in countries and regions where such processes are less or not yet fully mature.

By observing some of the shortcomings and weaknesses of the multistakeholder model, including at the IGF, and considering the obstacles posed by the extensive range of internet-related policy areas, coupled with the complex institutional framework of Internet governance, the Commission has decided to launch the Global Policy Internet Observatory (GIPO), as an online resource for the global community.

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<sup>3</sup> The Digital Agenda is the EU's strategy to help digital technologies, including the internet, to deliver smart, sustainable and inclusive economic growth. <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/>

GIPO aims at enabling a more inclusive participation of all stakeholders, including those with limited resources, by making information widely and easily accessible. Its objective is to be an instrument to strengthen existing Internet policy-making processes, making full use of modern technology. The Commission will provide seed funding to launch the GIPO, without necessarily managing it, being the sole sponsor or the political "owner".

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The IGF's role as facilitator of forward-looking discussions among stakeholders has positively contributed to the European Commission's agenda and activities in relation to the Internet.

Building on its success and in order to better serve its purpose in a changing political landscape, it is important for the IGF to further evolve and enhance its impact on global Internet governance and policy, as highlighted in the European Commission Communication on Internet governance and policy and re-asserted by the NETmundial statement<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://netmundial.br/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/NETmundial-Multistakeholder-Document.pdf>